

# IAEA wants 'immediate response' from Iran on extending monitoring deal

Fri, 2021-06-25 17:45

VIENNA: Iran has not responded to the UN atomic watchdog on extending their monitoring agreement that expired overnight, the agency said on Friday, calling for an "immediate" answer on the issue that threatens to derail wider talks on the Iran nuclear deal.

The agreement continues the International Atomic Energy Agency's collection of data on some of Tehran's activities, cushioning the blow of Iran's decision in February to reduce cooperation with the agency.

"An immediate response from Iran is needed in this regard," the IAEA said in a statement summarising a report by its chief Rafael Grossi to its 35-nation Board of Governors that was also seen by Reuters.

The agreement stipulates the IAEA cannot access the data collected until a later date, provided the agreement holds. Grossi wrote to Iran last week "to understand Iran's position regarding the possible continued collection, recording and retention of data," the report said.

As of Friday, Iran had not replied or indicated whether it intends to maintain the current arrangement, it said.

"The Director General stresses the vital importance of continuing the Agency's necessary verification and monitoring activities in Iran, including the uninterrupted collection and storage of data by its monitoring and surveillance equipment," it added.

Iran and the United States have been holding indirect talks on reviving the 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and major powers that imposed restrictions on Tehran's nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of international sanctions.



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[Rafael Grossi](#)

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## [Iraqi border authority seizes dangerous chemicals in Basra](#)

Fri, 2021-06-25 15:36

DUBAI: Iraq's Border Ports Authority seized a hoard of dangerous chemicals in Umm Qasr port in Basra on Friday, state news agency INA reported.

The authority said the chemicals were flammable.

"With the help and cooperation of the National Intelligence Service, we have seized two containers, the first one contains dangerous flammable chemicals which have been left for a long time at the port," INA quoted the statement. The second container has prohibited second-hand motorcycles which were being prepared for smuggling, the report added.

“Two reports have been organized with what was seized and were referred to the judicial authorities to take necessary legal measures,” INA quoted the statement.



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## [Lebanon parliament approves ration cards for needy](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-06-24 22:38

BEIRUT: Lebanon's parliamentary committees on Thursday approved a ration card for the needy population, which is increasing at an alarming rate, as the country is teetering on the edge of economic collapse.

According to the World Bank, the national currency has lost a majority of its

value since the end of 2019, resulting in more than half the population falling into poverty.

Ration cards would help struggling families with basic essentials such as petrol and groceries. But they have not been referred to parliament and funding for such a program has not been found.

The MPs of the Lebanese Forces Party voiced their rejection of “the randomness and the electoral accounts” in studying the ration card.

In this same context, Progressive Socialist Party leader Walid Jumblatt said: “The ration card would have no value without coordination with the World Bank and without a government that adopts a reform policy.”

Meanwhile, the country mourned the deaths of a southern family killed in a car accident, caused by petrol queues, earlier in the week in Saadiyat.

Fatima Koubeissi and her four daughters – Zahraa, Aya, Lia, and Tia – were killed in the accident. Their widowed father, Imad Hawile, was in Africa at the time of the accident looking for work and has since returned to Lebanon.

Frustrated citizens took to the streets again on Thursday to protest the deplorable conditions in the country.

Protesters blocked roads in Akkar and prevented a truck carrying milk and diapers from getting through. The truck was looted as the supplies were distributed to people in the area.

On Wednesday, a similar scene played out as protesters seized a fuel tank in Minieh, north of Lebanon, and distributed the fuel to the people.

Calls on social media were issued to “close roads and protest over the shortages of gasoline, diesel, and medicine along with the dramatic increase of food prices.”

Roads in the southern city of Sidon, and those leading to Tyre were closed, along with the Jal El-Dib road and the high road leading to Tripoli. The army re-opened the roads without clashing with protestors.

On Wednesday night, roads were closed in other areas while there were reports of protesters throwing flammable materials at the Lebanon Energy Ministry building in Beirut. A large number of truck drivers also parked their vehicles on the Zouk highway leading to the capital while protestors in Sidon took to the streets to express their anger at the ruling class.

In an attempt to quell the fuel shortage situation, President Michel Aoun chaired a meeting that included Finance Minister Ghazi Wazni, Energy Minister Raymond Ghajar, and Riad Salameh, the governor of the Banque Du Liban (BDL).

They decided to enable BDL to make the necessary arrangements to contain the crisis until more legislation being studied by parliament is passed.

Following the meeting, BDL announced that it will grant loans for the state

“due to the exceptional and dangerous circumstances that Lebanon is going through and the state’s failure to pay off its debts.”

This decision requires the signature of Lebanon’s caretaker Prime Minister Hassan Diab, who will reportedly refuse to sign because he represents a resigned government that has no power to take such decisions.

If it gets signed, the BDL proposal will help fund the import of gasoline based on the dollar exchange rate set at 3,900 Lebanese pounds, which means that a gas tank would cost between 65,000 and 70,000 pounds.





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## [Foreign fighters must leave Libya: US official](#)

Author:

Thu, 2021-06-24 22:26

LONDON: The remaining “thousands” of foreign fighters and mercenaries in Libya must leave the country urgently, US Acting Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Joey Hood said on Thursday at a press briefing attended by Arab News.

Hood was speaking from Berlin, where he was attending a conference on Libya alongside international allies and partners.

The US will “continue to work with our allies to operationalize their (foreign fighters’) departure. Progress on this was made here in Berlin, but obviously there’s much more work to do,” he said.

“The Libyan ceasefire agreement calls for the withdrawal of all foreign fighters and mercenaries, no exceptions ... The Libyans are clear: They want everybody out.”

The conference was organized amid plans to hold Libyan elections this December to select a new government. The Libyan state is currently controlled by a government of national unity.

Hood said Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh “represents an effort by the Libyan people and the major political actors to come together and form a government of national unity on an interim basis to bring them toward elections. If you’d asked them a year-and-a-half ago if that was possible, they’d say no.”

He added: “We’ve seen remarkable progress among political actors to stop fighting, to start various committees ... and to make important decisions, which has ended the fighting and brought the political actors together to form a government.”

Hood said the conference was aimed at producing a unified, stable and peaceful Libya, and the US has “had contact on the sidelines ... with all the major players, including Russia.”

He added that Washington wants to pursue opportunities for cooperation with Moscow and the other influential nations.

“I think there’s space for cooperation here, not just on the humanitarian side but on the security side as well,” he said. “I think we all have an interest in making sure Libya isn’t an exporter of instability.”



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## [Suspected Iranian nuclear production plant hit by drones, Tehran claims 'sabotage attack'](#)

Thu, 2021-06-24 22:21

LONDON: A drone attack on a building in Iran, thought to be a nuclear facility, has caused considerable damage, it was claimed Thursday, despite Tehran stating on Wednesday it had foiled the "sabotage" attempt on the building.

At least one small rotor-powered drone hit a factory owned by the Iran Centrifuge Technology Co. in Karaj, according to a US intelligence tip off published by the New York Times.

The factory, just outside Tehran, is believed to produce aluminium blades for use in Iran's two uranium enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordow, [UK paper The Times reported](#).

Israeli media also said the building had been hit in an attack, with some reports saying it had involved "several" drones.

There was no immediate comment or attribution of blame from either Israel or Iran.

The incident "left no casualties or damages and was unable to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program," Iranian state television said, before adding that authorities were now working to identify the perpetrators.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN body that monitors Tehran's nuclear program, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The factory was allegedly on a list of targets presented to the administration of former US President Donald Trump last year by Israel, which regards the Iranian nuclear program as a cover for developing nuclear



warheads, a claim denied by Tehran.

The incident follows several other suspected attacks targeting Iran's nuclear program that have heightened regional tensions in recent months, amid diplomatic efforts to resurrect Tehran's tattered nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), with world powers.

Trump's decision to withdraw from the deal in 2018 has seen Iran, over time, abandon all limitations on uranium enrichment. The country is now enriching uranium to 60 percent, its highest ever levels, although still short of those required to develop weapons.

Iran has said that its nuclear ambitions are peaceful and that it will return to its commitments once the US lifts sanctions imposed after Trump withdrew from the JCPOA.

Earlier this week, Iran's sole nuclear power plant at Bushehr underwent an unexplained temporary emergency shutdown. Authorities had warned earlier this year of the plant's possible closure because of US sanctions that supposedly prevented Iran procuring equipment for repairs.

In April, Iran's underground Natanz nuclear facility experienced a mysterious blackout that damaged some of its centrifuges. Last July, unexplained fires struck the advanced centrifuge assembly plant at Natanz, which authorities later also described as sabotage. Iran now is rebuilding that facility deep inside a nearby mountain.

\* *With AP*



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